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Report on the implementation of the 1988/1989 Environment in Africa Work Programme and proposals for the 1990/1991 biennium

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 1?? 1??? Environment in Africa work programme was developed within the framework of the 19?4/1??? medium-term plan for the programme. This medium-term plan provided for the Development of Environmental Capabilities including Conservation of Resources and Pollution Control. Within this context, member States would be assisted in establishing institutional machineries to monitor environmental degradation and the impacts of human health and the development process as a whole. Member States would also be assisted in formulating legislation and in creating law enforcement mechanisms to monitor and regulate the rational development and utilization of natural resources for development. Manpower development for environmental management would also be a component of the activities under the sub-programme.

2. Within this framework the Joint Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment would review the environment activities of member States as a response to the support of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) through the Environment in Africa Programme. A report will then be submitted by the Joint Committee to the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole and the ECA Conference of Ministers.

3. For implementation purposes four areas of activity were identified namely

a) technical co operation for developing national environmental capabilities

b) co ordination of environmental activities within the Commission with UNEP and with other international organizations working on environmental problems in Africa

c) environmental assessment and management relating to the impacts of development on natural resource utilization including pollution control and waste disposal and

d) development of manpower capabilities and creation of environmental awareness through environmental training and education activities.

II IMPLEMENTATION

4. Activities were carried out as outlined below

A) Technical co operation for developing national environmental capabilities

5. The focus of activities under this programme element was on combating drought and desertification control. A report on this is contained in document E/ECA/ENV/5? which is submitted to the Joint Committee for discussion and recommendations on orientations for further activities.

6. It is important to note that drought and desertification have become one of the priority areas of environmental concern in Africa because they are among the key factors of the present social and economic crises now facing more than thirty four (34) of the fifty (50) member States of the Commission. This is clearly demonstrated in the activities of concerned sub regional intergovernmental organizations such as the Permanent Inter-State Committee for combating drought in the Sahel (CILSS), the Inter-governmental Authority and Drought and Development (IGADD) in the Horn of Africa, the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) and initiative being undertaken by the Ministerial Conference on Desertification (COMIDES) and the Arid Land committee of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

7. It is, however, important to point out two important situations which need serious consideration. Firstly most of the programmes/projects on the different aspects of combating drought and the process of desertification are not co-ordinated both nationally and inter-organizationally. There is, therefore, the high possibility of duplication and waste of scarce resources.

8. The second situation is the inadequate emphasis on desert research. Document E/ECA/ENV/55 reviews the situation adequately and makes recommendations for possible actions for improvement.

9. In addition to the activities as reported in document E/ECA/ENV/55, the Commission has strengthened this component of the Environment in Africa Programme by providing resources for advisory services on drought and desertification control. These services are at the disposal of member States on request. It is hoped that member States will take full advantage of them.

B) Co-ordination of environmental activities within the Commission, with UNEP and with other international organizations working on environmental problems in Africa

10. The purpose of this programme element is to ensure that environmental considerations are taken care of in all the programmes of the Commission. Secondly, it is to ensure adequate co-ordination of the activities of all the agencies of the United Nations system as regards environmental matters in order to avoid the duplication of programmes and projects. This second aspect is co-ordinated by UNEP as the lead agency, globally, on environmental matters. The most important co-ordination activities that the Environment in Africa Programme of ECA has participated in have been those of the Designated Officials on Environmental Matters (DOEM), which assures the co-ordination of cross-programming between the concerned agencies of the UN system with those of UNEP, through the System-Wide Medium Term Plan (SWMTP), and the Inter-agency Working Group on Desertification (IAWGD) which ensures a co-ordinated approach to the desertification control activities of the agencies.

11. One important aspect of co ordination has been in the implementation of relevant resolutions of the ECA Conference of Ministers and those of the United Nations General Assembly.

12. Regarding resolutions of the ECA Conference of Ministers, document E/ECA/ENV/58 on the progress in the establishment of the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) is in response to resolution 651 (XXIII). Document E/ECA/ENV/61 is also required by resolution 645 (XXIII) on cyclone in the Indian ocean. This report has been prepared by WMO which was given the lead role by the Conference of Ministers.

13. As concerns resolutions of the UN General Assembly document E/ECA/ENV/60 on the implementation of the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was required by the General Assembly resolution 42/187 and, implicitly, resolution 42/186.

C) Environmental assessment and management relating to the impacts of development on natural resource utilization including pollution control and waste disposal

14. Under this programme element two reports have been presented to the Joint Committee for consideration. They are

1. Document E/ECA/ENV/56 on the modalities for incorporating the Cairo Programme of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment into on going national environment programmes and

2. Document E/ECA/ENV/57 on the development of environmental legislation ratification and accession to regional and international agreements and conventions on the environment.

15. In addition to these, two reports are being prepared for the Niamey and Lusaka-based MULPOCs on measures to mitigate environmental health and disease problems relating to drought and desertification. These reports will be presented at the next meetings of these MULPOCs.

16. Another report is being prepared for the ECA Conference of Ministers on the management of environmental degradation, particularly drought and desertification aspects, in the implementation of the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery. This report will be presented to the next Conference of Ministers in April 1989.

17. Two technical publications were programmed for the biennium namely

1. Environmental problems of underground water resources development in drought prone countries of Africa for agriculturists and environmental managers and

2. Pollution control and waste disposal problems in selected African countries a case study for the Industrial Development Decade in Africa, for industrial planners and environmental managers 1980-1990.

19. Due to resource constraints for the biennium 1988-1989, these two publications are being reformulated for reprogramming and delivery during the 1990-1991 biennium.

18. The major problem that the secretariat has in implementing this programme element is the scarcity of relevant data on individual member States due to non response to correspondence sent out requesting information. A more serious problem is that, even when specific missions are sent out, it is difficult to collect the information because it is scattered in several government ministries and departments. This underscores the need for a central government institution for environmental matters which will serve as a focal point on all such matters.

b) Development of manpower capabilities and creation of environmental awareness through environmental training and education activities

20. Two main activities have been carried out under this programme element. The first one deals with the incorporation of environmental components into the programmes of ECA sponsored inter-governmental institutions. The second activity has been the servicing of seminar and study tours to China and to the Soviet Union. The reports have been made available to the Joint Committee for information.

21. In order to keep abreast of the state of the development of national manpower capabilities, a Directory of Environmentalists and list of institutions in Africa has been published (document E/ECA/ENV/38). This is a first issue and the entries are not as many as they should be because only very few responded to the questionnaires that were sent out. Members of the Joint Committee are requested to fill in the questionnaire at the back of the directory and return it to the secretariat, as indicated.

III. PROPOSITIONS FOR BIENNIUM 1990-1991

22. The Environment in Africa Programme proposes to submit the programme ideas outlined, to be considered for inclusion in the work programme of the UN secretariat for the biennium 1990-1991.

a) Objectives

23. The objectives of the proposed programme activities are:

i) Inter-governmental objective a) to establish national sub-regional and regional environmental capabilities concerned with environmental assessment, management and conservation, including policy, legislative and administrative mechanisms; b) to promote the environmentally sound management and conservation of natural resources; c) to better handle the problem of pollution control including hazardous wastes and potentially toxic materials.

ii) General objective of the secretariat: to assist member States in the establishment of national, sub-regional and regional capabilities concerned with environmental management, assessment and conservation, particularly, the development of institutional and manpower capabilities including policies and legislative mechanisms, the management and conservation of natural resources and pollution control.

b) Problems addressed

24. Events over the last five years in Africa - drought, desertification, and recently, the dumping of hazardous wastes - have highlighted more than ever before, the importance of environmental management for environmentally sound and sustainable development. There have been national, sub regional and regional initiatives at the development of machineries and capabilities for environmental management, assessment and conservation but they have not been able to cope with the rapid increase in environmental pressures as a result of population growth, drought and desertification and other environmental stresses arising from development activities. The present crises that Africa has been going through are very strongly environment related. The challenge, therefore, is for member States to have environmental considerations as an integral part of their development programmes. They should be encouraged and assisted to do so.

c) Strategy for the period 1990-1991

25. During the period 1990-1991, it is proposed to organize workshops, seminars and if possible fellowships and study tours for policy and decision makers in order to help them to develop and/or strengthen their national capabilities for environmental management assessment and conservation. With this as a base sub regional and regional capabilities and infrastructure can also be developed and/or strengthened.

26. It is also being proposed to carry out pilot projects and other field activities in the area of the management and conservation of natural resources and pollution control. This will be done with the view to establishing guidelines for environmental impact assessment and environmental impact studies.

Sub-programme details

Sub-programme 1. Development of environmental capabilities including policies and legislation

27. The activities of this sub-programme will be aimed at institution strengthening and manpower development including policy orientation and environmental legislation. This will be done through workshops, seminars, study tours and training fellowships. They will also be complemented by the activities under Section 24.

Sub-programme 2. Management and conservation of natural resources including environmental statistics

28. The activities of this sub-programme will be geared towards the conservation of the biospherical ecosystems and handle those problems that are of immediate and long term concern to member States. They will be carried out through studies, pilot projects and other related field activities as well as the collection and analysis of environmental data.

Sub-programme 3. Pollution control, including hazardous wastes and potentially toxic materials

29. This sub-programme will deal with the management and/or disposal of hazardous industrial wastes and the handling of potentially toxic materials through environmental impact assessment and environmental impact studies.

IV. CONCLUSION

30. This is the state of the implementation of the 1988-1989 Environment in Africa Work Programme and the propositions that are being made for 1990-1991. Member States are requested to examine both very carefully to ensure that they respond to their needs and to make suggestions accordingly.